

Graffiti

This is the second in a series of crime prevention articles provided to you, courtesy of the Milton-Freewater Police Department. Our subject today is graffiti, more specifically, the relationship between prompt removal of graffiti and the incidence of recurrence at the same location.

We all know what graffiti is, and we all know it's an eyesore in our community. Perhaps what some people do not realize is that if they remove graffiti from their property within the first twenty-four to forty-eight hours, they decrease the probability that it will recur there. Nationwide statistics bear this out.

People may ask: "Why don't police just catch those doing graffiti"? This is a common question, and not an unreasonable one. The fact is, application of graffiti is another cowardly crime, and is therefore committed predominantly in the darkness of night. One, two, or even three police officers on patrol in a city cannot possibly see, watch, or observe all the possible locations and structures where graffiti might be applied.

Consider this: Most residences and other buildings have at least four sides. Try to envision a way a single officer can observe all four sides of a structure at that same time. It cannot be done, except of course from the air. This demonstrates how easily a private location for the application of graffiti can be found. And those who apply graffiti, "taggers", are very good at police avoidance, therefore have no problem finding locations where they can apply graffiti unbeknownst to law enforcement until it's reported.

Prompt removal of graffiti not only prevents repeat occurrences, it is also the law in Milton-Freewater, as well as most communities. It might seem like requiring a private property owner to abate his or her graffiti is re-victimizing, but this is not at all the intent of the law. The intent is simply to have citizens help keep our city visually livable, and at the same time, thwart re-application of this noxious writing.

Law enforcement does not enjoy hassling people about issues like graffiti. Furthermore, no one enjoys the thought of receiving a fine for something they didn't do. We would just encourage anyone who has the misfortune of having graffiti applied to their property to simply remove it, or paint over it, within the first twenty-four to forty-eight hours. In the end, and over time, this will make a difference in our community. Remember, graffiti is not just a police problem, or the neighbor's problem, it's everyone's problem.